ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW TEAM

Eastern Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development Project

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW TEAM,
AN EVALUATION

Preparation of this report has been, in part, assisted by Grant No. 10330482 from the New England Regional Commission administered by the Southeastern Connecticut Regional Planning Agency

EASTERN CONNECTICUT RESOURCE CONSERVATION
AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
Environmental Review Team
139 Boswell Avenue
Norwich, Connecticut 06360

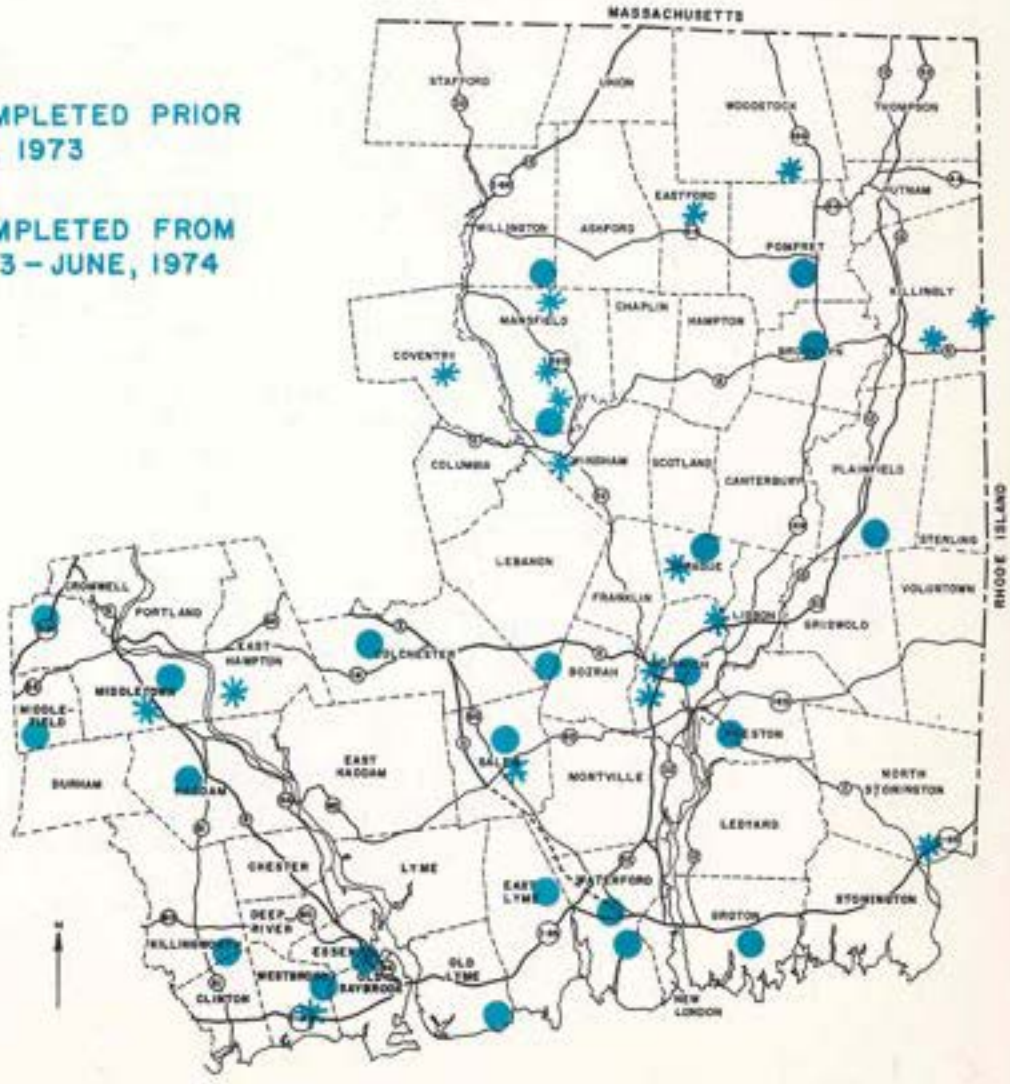
June 30, 1974

Eastern Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development Project

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW TEAM LOCATION OF PROJECTS

✱ REVIEWS COMPLETED PRIOR TO APRIL, 1973

● REVIEWS COMPLETED FROM APRIL, 1973 – JUNE, 1974



EASTERN CONNECTICUT
RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
HISTORY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW TEAM	3
REVIEW PROCEDURE	7
Request and Approval	8
Scheduling and Notification of Team	9
Field Review	10
Individual and Team Reports	11
Presentation to Town and Developer	11
SUMMARY OF REVIEWS	15
Project Characteristics	16
Team Participation	18
Participation by Town and Developer	20
Review Procedures	22
Individual and Team Reports	23
EVALUATION	25
FUTURE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW TEAM	29
In Connecticut	30
In Eastern Connecticut	30
APPLICABILITY OF THE TEAM CONCEPT TO OTHER NEW ENGLAND STATES	33
APPENDIX	37

INTRODUCTION

Much of the development occurring in Eastern Connecticut ignores the natural environment, and most developers give little heed to resource problems or potentials except as they affect the short-term economics of their projects. The result frequently is a long-term economic drain on the community to correct environmental problems resulting from inadequate consideration of natural resources in project planning and design. To reduce the risk of long-term cost to the public and, in many cases, to reduce development costs of the private entrepreneur, information on a broad range of site conditions is needed by and must be interpreted for both the local planning and zoning commission and the developer before a project reaches a fixed state.

Towns and developers within Eastern Connecticut currently can obtain assistance from an Environmental Review Team in the review of major residential, commercial, industrial, and municipal projects. The objective of the Team is to assist in the development of better environmental quality and the long term economics of land use.

The Environmental Review Team, consisting of professionals covering a wide range of disciplines, first identifies the distribution, quantity, and quality of the natural resources on a site. From this basis an evaluation is made of the ability of the site to support the proposed development and the probable effects of the development on the natural resources. Off-site impacts are included in these considerations. The Team acts only in an advisory capacity, with any actual decisions being made by the town and/or developer. The Team does not compete with private consultants by providing finished site plans but rather represents public interest in trying to indicate the need and advantage of applying sound conservation principles.

Though the Team has been in existence since 1969, it has been most active since April of 1973. This has largely been due to the receipt of a demonstration grant from the New England Regional Commission (Grant No. 10330482) which provided for a full-time coordinator of the project and supporting services. Of the 40 reviews that have been completed to date, 23 have been conducted with the assistance of the grant.

With the number of reviews having increased in the past year, the experience of the Team has also increased. Procedures have been fairly well standardized, though changes continue to be made. A continuing evaluation process is crucial to the success of the Team and its ability to serve the towns. A workshop for members of the Environmental Review Team was held on November 8, 1973, to discuss and evaluate the many aspects of the Team and its procedures. This report is the first formal attempt to summarize the history of the Team and its progress, evaluate its effectiveness, and explore future possibilities. Hopefully the report will provide a tool for Connecticut in expanding the Team concept to other parts of the state and for other states interested in developing a similar program.

HISTORY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW TEAM

The most unique aspect in the development of the Environmental Review Team has been the cooperation between several different agencies at various levels of government. Brought together under the framework of the Eastern Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Project, these agencies have provided staff time to the committees which have developed the team concept and procedures, as well as staff time for the actual reviews. Involved in this project have been the USDA Soil Conservation Service, Connecticut Cooperative Extension Service, Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Connecticut Department of Health, and the five Regional Planning Agencies.

The team concept was first proposed in 1968 by the directors of the Southeastern Connecticut and Windham Regional Planning Agencies. The need for a team at that time was seen to be primarily in the review of residential subdivisions. Unsuccessful attempts to fund the project were made in 1968-69 through the Connecticut Department of Community Affairs and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Despite the lack of funding, the first two reviews were conducted in May, 1969. These were proposed residential developments in Salem and Sprague. The Team, known then as the Subdivision Practices Team, consisted of a soil scientist, biologists, forester, engineer, sanitarian, and urban planner. The RC&D Project Coordinator acted as coordinator for the Team.

Following these initial projects, the Regional and Town Planning Committee (now known as the Land and Water Resources Committee) of the RC&D Project was charged to study all possible funding sources. Within the next three years, the Connecticut Department of Community Affairs, the Federal Farmers Home Administration, Federal Rural Area Development Program, New England Regional Commission, and various foundations were among the agencies approached, but without success.

During this period a number of reviews were undertaken, with the frequency increasing in mid-1972. The Team began to take on projects other than residential proposals, such as municipal and industrial projects. Also, the Team itself was expanded to include a geologist, landscape architect, and climatologist on a regular basis. The experience with the early reviews clarified the need for a specified coordinator on the Team. However, as it became too much of a burden for one individual, the coordinating responsibilities were rotated. This resulted in reports of varying quality, depending largely on the time and resources available to the coordinator. The need for a full-time team coordinator became more apparent as the number of reviews increased.

Finally, a new application to the New England Regional Commission was approved in February, 1973. The demonstration grant of almost $30,000 was awarded to the Southeastern Connecticut Regional Planning Agency for administration. However, the Team, now known as the Environmental Review Team, continued to operate within the framework of the Eastern Connecticut RC&D Project,

with the Executive Council acting as the policy-making body and the Land and Water Resources Committee providing technical assistance.

The demonstration grant, originally for a 12-month period and later extended to 15 months, took effect April 1, 1973 and ended as of June 30, 1974. During this time the Environmental Review Team conducted 23 reviews, 3 of which involved only a partial team. The increased capabilities of the Team with the full-time coordinator are obvious when compared to the number of reviews completed during the preceding four years, a total of 17.

With one individual acting as coordinator, it has been possible to standardize most procedures and develop a more consistent quality in the reports. This has also made it easier to compare, evaluate, and improve on the reviewing and reporting process. We will present some of our findings as they relate to the effective operation of the Team under the Summary section of this report.

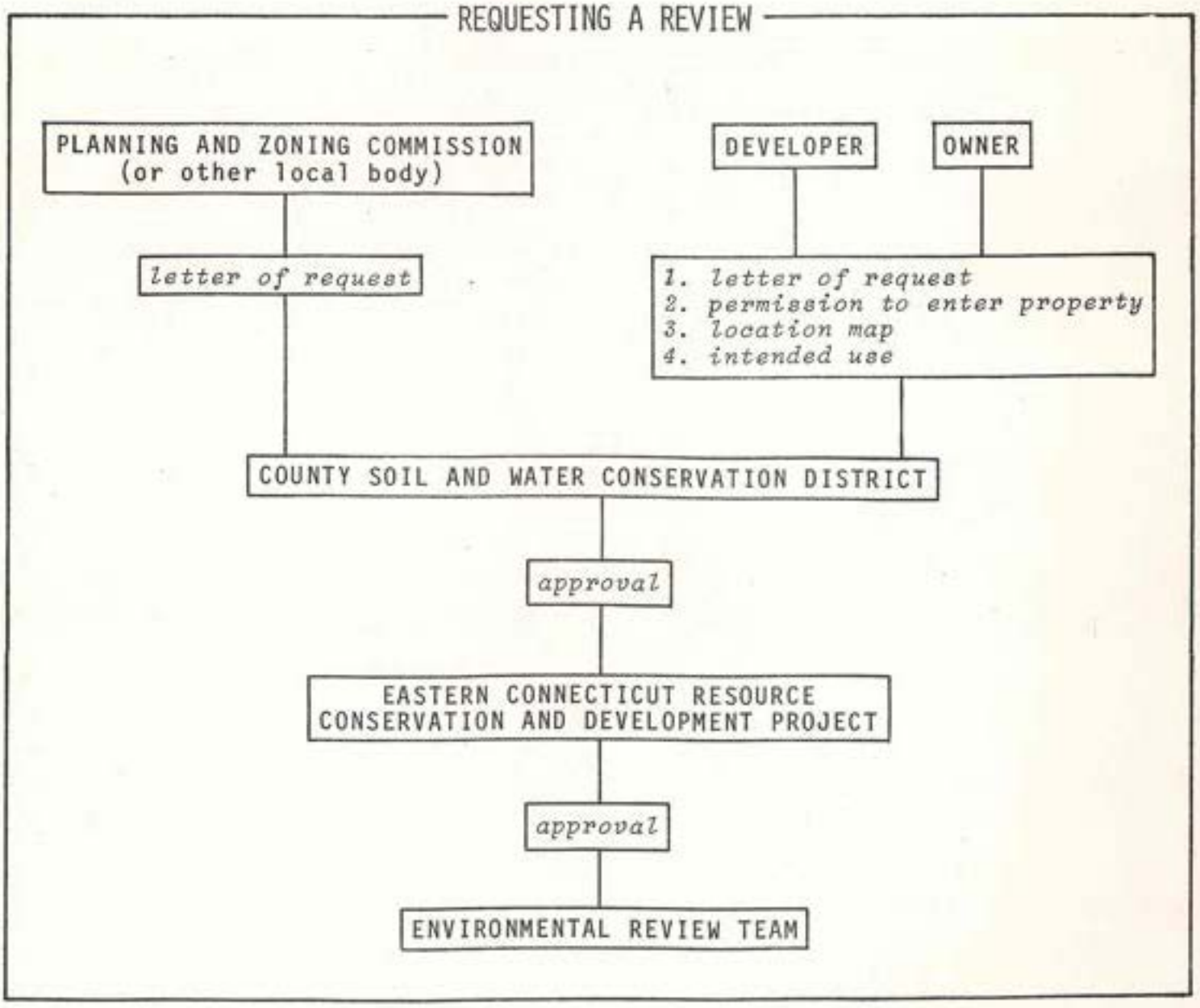
The future of the Environmental Review Team on a permanent basis is still uncertain. Attempts to secure major funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection to continue the Team in Eastern Connecticut and expand it statewide were generally unsuccessful. Some increased staffing in the Department of Environmental Protection was obtained, however, so that at least limited assistance may be provided to other parts of the state.

For Eastern Connecticut, funding to continue the full-time coordinator and supporting services has been obtained through a grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration issued to the Eastern Connecticut Development Council (ECDC). Though the funding source has changed, the Team will continue to operate within the framework of the Eastern Connecticut RC&D Project.

REVIEW PROCEDURES

The procedure which has been developed in Eastern Connecticut for conducting reviews has some aspects peculiar to the area and the relationships existing between agencies. However, the process as a whole is based on the cooperation and involvement of all parties: the town, owner and/or developer, and Team participants.

Request and Approval. The first step in the review is the formal request from the town and the developer. The flow chart below shows the process for the request and approval of projects for Team review. The request should include letters from both the town and developer, a location map, surveyed plot plan (if available), and a statement of intended use. If the property owner is other than the developer, his permission to conduct the study is also required. It is most beneficial if the local commission(s) having some authority over the project is involved. This is usually the Planning and Zoning Commission, though the Team has also worked with Inland Wet-



lands Agencies, Economic Development Commissions, Parks and Recreation Commissions, Housing Authorities, and Solid Waste Committees. In towns lacking these bodies, the chief executive officer usually makes the formal request.

A letter of request is first directed to the applicable County Soil and Water Conservation District for their approval as a project measure. This serves two purposes: first, board members often have local insight into the projects and how the Team may or may not be able to assist, and second, their approval is required for participation by Soil Conservation Service personnel. The request is then forwarded to the Eastern Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development Project. For projects similar in scale and proposed land use to previous reviews, the Land and Water Resources Committee has the authority to approve and schedule projects for review. In unusual cases, such as horse racing facilities and sale of water company lands, the Committee evaluates the request and makes a recommendation to the Executive Council, but leaves the final decision in the hands of the Council.

Scheduling and Notification of the Team. Once a project is approved, it can be scheduled for the field review. Two projects per month is the limit which has been established, based on the available time of Team members. For convenience and consistency, we have set the first and third Thursdays of each month as review dates.

Notices are sent to Team members two weeks prior to a review. Included in the notice is a general description of the proposed development, any particular concerns of the town, soils and topographic maps of the site, a list of other published data on the site (e.g. geology), and any mapped or technical information provided by the developer (e.g. site plan, test hole data, etc.).

The standard Team used in Eastern Connecticut consists of the following personnel, provided by the agency indicated:

SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE:

- District Conservationist
- Soil Scientist
- Civil Engineer

STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION:

- Geologist/Hydrologist*
- Forester
- Wildlife Biologist*
- Fish Biologist*

---

* These personnel are also available from the Soil Conservation Service, if needed.

STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH:

Sanitarian

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE:

Climatologist/Environmentalist
Landscape Architect

REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY:

Community Planner

The composition of the Team does vary somewhat depending on the specific project and the availability of personnel. In a few cases involving small parcels of land, there have been as few as 3 Team members involved. In other cases, one or two Team members may be eliminated if there does not appear to be a need for them, e.g., a fish biologist for a project with no existing or proposed waterbodies on or near the site. There have also been instances where the Team has been expanded to suit the needs of a project; for the horse racing facility, specialists in transportation, air pollution, solid waste, and horses were added.

There is a significant side benefit of using personnel from existing agencies on a request basis, rather than having a single team conducting reviews on a full-time basis. Any one team member will still spend the majority of his time working for his respective agency. He will thus be in continual contact with other developments in the state within his field which might contribute to or have an impact on a specific project. Also, the team experience provides for an interaction between agencies which might not otherwise occur.

Field Review. The Team members, developer, and town representatives meet at the town hall or other location convenient to the site. A preliminary meeting is held here before going out to the site, the purpose of which is to review the background information sent with the notice and to give all parties involved the opportunity to ask questions. It is particularly desirable to have the developer present to answer specific questions on his proposal.

The actual site review consists of walking over the site as a group. The time spent on a site will vary according to its size and variety. The emphasis in the field is on an exchange of ideas, plans, concerns, alternatives, etc., between the persons present. Being on the site also gives Team members a chance to double check mapped information, such as soils, topography, and surficial and bedrock geology, and identify other resources, such as the existing vegetation and its wildlife value.

Following the field review, a summary meeting is held at the site (or indoors during inclement weather). This meeting is primarily for Team members, though the developer and town representatives

may remain for it. The various aspects of the development are discussed, with consideration given to potential problems, means of prevention or correction, and alternatives. This meeting helps individual Team members to identify those areas which should be covered in their reports and what additional information may be needed.

Individual and Team Reports. In preparing their individual reports, Team members are requested to follow a standard format. A work sheet is distributed to all Team members at each review. Reports can be handwritten or typed on the form or on a separate page, with the general headings indicated. The breakdowns used on the field sheet are listed on the following pages. Each team member places his comments where suitable. No one Team member normally comments on all areas.

Team members are requested to submit their reports to the coordinator within two weeks following the review. However, experience has shown that it usually takes three to four weeks to get all the reports. Once the reports are in hand, the coordinator compiles the final report. It follows the same format as the work sheets with a description of the existing resources preceding the section by section discussion of the project. Comments from various Team members are combined under each specific heading. The soil map and chart of urban limitations of the soils is presented in the Appendix, along with any other technical information too lengthy or involved to put within the body of the report.

Presentation to Town and Developer. When the final report is completed, a meeting is set up with the local commission(s) and the developer. When time permits, copies of the report are sent in advance to all persons invited to the meeting. Otherwise, the reports are distributed at the meeting. The coordinator and one of the Team members, usually the SCS District Conservationist, first summarize the report, highlighting major concerns. Then a question and answer period follows in which the commission members and developer may ask for clarification or further explanation of specific parts of the report.

Generally speaking, the Team's involvement with a project ends at this point. Though later questions can be submitted to the Team coordinator, further action on the project is now up to the town and developer. On occasion, an individual Team member may be able to follow through on a specific aspect of the project within the jurisdiction of his regular position (e.g. District Conservationist may assist in preparation of a Conservation Plan).

Reviewer_____ Location_____

Discipline_____ Date_____

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW TEAM WORK SHEET

General Statement - (Including description of site relative to the specific discipline of the reviewer).

Specific Items for Evaluation	Concerns
1. Water Supply	
(a) municipal or community service in area	ability to expand service, feasibility of transmission lines
(b) on-site	availability of supply relative to need, quantity, and quality
2. Waste Disposal	
(a) sewers	ability to expand service, feasibility of transmission lines
(b) on-site	septic system adequacy and host conditions
3. Foundation Development and Graded Conditions	Substratum support, drainage, slope stability, erosion and sedimentation
4. Roads and Utilities	
(a) existing	increased design capacity, feasibility of physical expansion
(b) additional	functional road needs, feasibility of construction
5. Hazards	
(a) natural	identification of natural hazards

Specific Items for Evaluation	Concerns
(b) man induced	avoidance of produced hazards
6. Aesthetics and Preservation	unique and fragile features, ecological habitats, historic sites, vistas, etc.
(a) forestry	
(b) wildlife	
(c) fish	
(d) other	
7. Services to Support Development	do proper services exist, can they be expanded, or supplied by developer?
8. Compatibility of Surrounding Land Uses	compatible development
9. Alternative Land Uses for Area	best use for land relative to existing resources, priorities on uses of land

Additional comments by reviewer for which there is no appropriate place in chart and summary of critical aspects.

Time Spent on Review - Field_____ Report_____ Total_____

SUMMARY OF REVIEWS

As of June 30, 1974, 40 reviews will have been completed since the start of the Environmental Review Team in May, 1969. (A chronoligical list is given in the Appendix). Of these 40, 23 have been conducted with the assistance of the demonstration grant from the New England Regional Commission. The projects vary in proposed land use, size, stage of planning, and ownership. Reviews vary according to team composition, participation by the developer and town, available data, and quality of individual and team reports. By summarizing some of this data in statistical form, aspects contributing to or detracting from a successful review hopefully can be identified.

Project Characteristics. During 1972, the Team expanded its activity to include all types of land use. As a result, almost half of the projects conducted have been non-residential in nature. The following table summarizes the projects since May of 1969 as to their proposed land use:

Residential:	Single and Multi-family Developments	19	
	Seasonal Use	2	
	Planned Unit Development	2	
	SUBTOTAL:		23
Municipal and/or State:	Public Facilities	3	
	Landfills	2	
	Sewage Disposal	2	
	SUBTOTAL:		7
Industrial			6
Recreational			3
Commercial			1
	TOTAL:		40

Having a variety of land use proposals adds interest to the reviews and increases the participation by individual team members. Different uses require different approaches to the site and present different problems and opportunities for the various disciplines involved. Thus it helps prevent Team members from getting into a set routine.

One question which has arisen with respect to specific land uses is whether the Team can be of significant assistance in projects which fall under state regulatory bodies. In particular, this would include the landfills and sewage disposal systems. In the case of the landfills, there is a solid waste division within the State Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) which should be able to assist towns at the site selection, planning, and operating stages. They are also responsible for issuing the necessary permits. So though the Team may be able to provide some assistance, it appears to be a better use of personnel and time for the towns to go directly to DEP.

A similar situation existed with a septage lagoon and a large scale on-site sewage disposal system. With the septage lagoon,

the State enforcement official disagreed with Team members on the basic design of the system. Since the State official was in charge of the permits, the town had to comply with his design. The large scale sewage disposal system was installed at a State facility and the Team was requested to review the proposal by the town. Despite the fact that the contract had already been signed, the system was moved back somewhat from adjacent waterbodies, and both metering and monitoring facilities were installed to document the effectiveness of the system, in response to Team recommendations.

As a result of these experiences, it seems desirable when evaluating each request to consider any regulatory aspects of the project and how they may affect the usefulness of the Team.

The size of the sites reviewed has varied from 3 to well over 200 acres. The chart below shows the breakdown of projects by acreage.

Size of Site	Number of Reviews
0-50 acres	14
50-100 acres	8
100-200 acres	9
over 200 acres	9
TOTAL:	40

As can be seen above, the sizes of the project areas have been fairly well distributed among the four categories.

The size of the properties did not appear to affect the quality or usefulness of the final reports, though it did influence the level of detail. On the smaller sites, the Team members generally were more specific as to the distribution of resources, problems to be encountered, and means for minimizing these problems. On larger sites, these same types of guidelines were given, but on a more general level. However, in both cases the Team was able to be of assistance.

Extremely large projects, such as the new town proposal in Coventry, have not been undertaken by the Team due to the extraordinary scale and the time that would be necessary to develop a useful product.

Another factor affecting the level of detail within the final report is the stage of the development plans when the team is requested to review a site. The plans have ranged from the verbal stage where only very general plans have been formed; to conceptual or preliminary plans showing the approximate configuration of the proposal; to final development plans with roads, lots, drainage, and so forth fully designed.

Comments and recommendations on sites with detailed plans tend to be more specific in nature, but narrower in scope. On sites in the early planning stages, comments may be less detailed, but the possibility for major alterations in the plans is greater and therefore allows greater flexibility when considering alternatives for the site. Thus the Team appears to have a greater potential for assistance and beneficial impact on the final project if the development plans are in the early stages.

In 11 of the 40 projects, the existing or proposed ownership was public, either by the town or state. In these situations, it was most often a commission charged with a specific project, rather than a regulatory commission, making the request (e.g. school building committee, economic development commission, solid waste study committee). In almost all cases, these reports have been used by the towns in selecting sites and/or preparing plans and recommendations. One factor which may contribute to the more consistent use of the reports pertaining to public facilities is the lack of friction, which often exists between a town and a private developer.

Team Participation. The standard team, as described previously, was used for most reviews. However, in several cases the Team was either expanded or reduced according to the needs of the review. During the past year, the Team has been supplemented by personnel in the following disciplines (frequency of participation shown in parentheses following discipline).

Recreation (4)
Transportation (2)
Solid Waste (2)
Air Quality (1)
Water Quality (1)
Animal Science (1)

These specialists were drawn upon for projects where the proposals involved plans or evaluations of a specific or technical nature (e.g. traffic flow study) or where the overall proposal related directly to a discipline not included within the standard team (e.g. recreation). Acquiring additional personnel for the Team can be time consuming, particularly if it involves an agency not normally involved in the RC&D Project. This should be considered when scheduling the review.

A partial team was also used for three reviews in the past year. In two cases, the scale of the project was limited and the land area involved was under ten acres. Though it was felt that some assistance could and should be offered, using an entire team did not appear to be worthwhile use of members' time. In these cases only three Team members participated: District Conservationist, Soil Scientist, and Planner.

The third instance using a partial team involved an urgent request to evaluate the impact of filling inland wetlands in order to construct athletic fields for a new school, for which the contract

was about to be signed. Since time was of the essence and only one aspect of the project was of concern, the Team was limited to a District Conservationist, Biologist, Engineer, Geologist, and Planner. Having this flexibility to expand or contract the Team when needed enables the Team to respond to a greater variety of projects and situations.

Participation by individual team members varies. The personnel from the Cooperative Extension Service seem to have the greatest difficulty in attending on a regular basis, due largely to their teaching responsibilities at the University of Connecticut. Other Team members also miss reviews occasionally. When a replacement cannot be obtained, a team member usually visits the site on his own at a separate time. Though this is often the only feasible solution, it is preferable for the entire team to be on the site together to permit interaction among different specialists and to assure that each team member has an opportunity to question the developer.

On one review, where construction of a large pond along an existing trout brook was being proposed, the fish biologist was absent. His knowledge regarding the present quality and use of the brook and the probable effects of temperature change and siltation would have provided a signigicant contribution to the discussion in the field. Also, differences regarding pond construction had to be resolved by telephone rather than in the field, where it would have been quicker and more effective.

The professional conduct of the Team members and quality of their reports are critical to the acceptance and use of their recommendations. Objectivity is a crucial element, and factual information should be the basis for any comments or suggestions made. Conduct in the field may also affect how the town and developer perceive the objectivity in the final report.

It thus appears the prime challenge to the Team members is the necessity to maintain a technical and professional point of view and to maintain credibility while conducting review activities. The Team has been generally successful in accomplishing this to date. Some of the items contributing to this acceptance include: avoiding pre-judgment, keeping an open mind, and interchanging ideas with all participants in the dield. Both in the field and in writing reports, the reasoning behind recommendations should be clear. The Team should point out concerns, limitations, alternatives, and areas of possible trade-off. They should not act as an advocate of one point of view or another. Balance should be maintained to preserve an objective manner.

The experience of the Team on one review underscores the value of professionalism in all aspects of the review. The Team, town representatives, and developers all met at the developer's office before going into the field. This location was chosen primarily due to its proximity to the site. At this time the developer also provided a packet of information on the proposal and other projects done by the company, into which was incorporated materials provided

previously by the Team. Following the review, all persons present were invited to lunch by the developer. Had this offer not been declined, the credibility of the Team could have been seriously compromised.

Following the review, the coordinator received a call from the town attorney. Due to our having met at the developer's office, his extremely cooperative attitude, and the luncheon invitation, the town representatives left with the impression that the Team was possibly employed by the developer. This was in spite of the fact that their Planning and Zoning Commission had made the original request for the review. Reassurances were given to the attorney and later to the town as to the history and purpose of the Team's involvement in this project. This, together with the professional conduct of the Team in the field and the quality and presentation of the material in the final report, resulted in no unpleasant repercussions. However, this situation stressed the care necessary to prevent misunderstandings and the value of professionalism in resolving them when they do arise.

Participation by Town and Developer. Participation during the field review by both the town and the developer is strongly encouraged. Of the 40 reviews completed, only 5 cases existed where neither the town nor the developer was represented. Of the remaining 35 reviews, there were 11 reviews where the town was not represented and 3 where the developer was not present. The reviews of a municipal nature generally did not involve a second party other than a paid consultant.

With the five reviews where only the Team was present, two could be labelled as generally unsuccessful, one as having no change in status, and the last two as unique cases where a member(s) of the Team provided a direct liaison with the town. Of the two unsuccessful reviews, one was poorly conducted from start to finish, while in the other case, the information provided in the report was just not utilized adequately. In the latter case, the developer did not agree with the data in the report, proceeded with his plans, and eventually received local approval. He is now attempting to build on the marginal portions of his property and is facing extreme difficulty in meeting State health regulations. Had he been present on the site with the Team, he might have been more receptive and realized the unsuitability of these areas for the proposed development, thus avoiding the present situation. The town also could have made better use of the report in its approval of the plans.

In several instances where the town was not represented on a review, it appeared that they did not want to get involved and/or they wanted an outside group to make their decisions. However, having at least the developer present was beneficial. Though the developers did not always follow through with the Team recommendations, they generally did not dispute the contents of the report.

There were several cases where the developer either dropped his plans completely or changed them as a result of being with the Team in the field. For example, an individual planning to subdivide a 50-acre parcel for residential use, later advertised and sold the site as a whole for recreational use. In another case, an agreement with the Soil and Water Conservation District for development of a conservation plan on an excavation site resulted directly from the contact between the developer and the Team on the site.

There was one problem which arose during the presentation of a few final reports as a result of not having town representatives in the field. A certain degree of rapport usually develops among the individuals on a review which carries through somewhat to the final meeting with the town and developer. But in these cases, an undercurrent of uncertainty or alienation on the part of the town was sensed on several occasions, particularly if the report was generally favorable towards the proposed project.

Very rarely was the developer or owner absent on a field review. There is one case, however, where having the owner present might have been beneficial. The site was originally reviewed with the intent of industrial development by the municipality, and the owner was not involved in the site review. This proposal later fell through, and the owner started to fill in the wetlands on his property in preparation for some other development. He was then forced to stop filling by the State, under the Inland Wetlands Act. Had he been on the site whth the Team, this might have been avoided. Ideas for development compatible with the wetlands had been discussed, and the owner might have thus seen and used the wetlands as an asset rather than an obstacle to development.

Most reviews conducted with both parties present have been completed within the past year. In most cases it is still too early to determine or evaluate the final outcome of the projects, though some decisions have already been made. In a few instances the developer dropped his plans. In other cases, the town has denied permits or issued them with stipulations, based at least partially on material provided by the Team. In one case the town, and in another the developer, have come back to the Team to request further comments as the development plans have been begun or revised.

With both parties involved from the beginning, there generally have been fewer disagreements as to the contents of the reports. How the reports are used will probably reflect the particular commissions and developers involved. The greatest potential appears to exist where both the town and developer are attempting to use the Team's information and cooperate in the development of acceptable plans.

Another, though not frequent situation which has occurred has been a defensive and antagonistic attitude on the part of the developer. Generally, this has occurred when the development plans are fairly far along and the town has insisted on the Team review.

The developer is understandably reluctant to make changes in his plans due to the cost involved. The relationship previously existing between the town and developer may also contribute to this antagonistic attitude. It is imperative in situations such as this to have the developer present on the field review, since this is where the most effective communication occurs. This type of occurrence reinforces the desirability of reviewing a project in the early planning stages, since all parties are usually more receptive to alternatives at that time.

Review Procedures. As far as the request and approval of a project for review, the procedures have not significantly changed. However, the procedures used in the field and in the presentation of the reports to the town and developer have been varied in an attempt to improve the exchange and understanding of ideas and to develop a more useful product.

During the early reviews, the Team met at the site under consideration and conducted the review there, including any preliminary or summary meetings. This was sufficient in some cases, but in others there were problems, such as bad weather cutting things short and the inability to adequately peruse development plans in the field. As a result, the Team now meets at a specified place prior to the field review for the preliminary meeting. If necessary, the Team may also return here for the summary session.

The preliminary and summary meetings have not always been included within the review procedure. However, their value has become apparent with use. At the preliminary meeting, plans can be presented, resource information discussed, and questions asked of the Team, town, and developer. With this exchange as a common base, the field review tends to be more purposeful and better use is made of the time in the field. Poor weather may still detract from the review, but not as significantly. The summary meeting is primarily for the Team. In a systematic fashion, the problems and opportunities of the site are reviewed, questions asked, and differences resolved. This session reinforces the Team concept and is particularly important if the exchange in the field has been minimal.

There is some question as to whether the town and developer should be present at the summary meeting. On one hand, it is felt that the town and developer should be involved as much as possible in the Team's exchange of ideas and recommendations. On the other hand, Team members may feel inhibited in their presence and may not offer as much in the way of alternatives. Experience has varied on the reviews, and no particular problems have arisen. Generally, when the town and developer remain, they mostly observe rather than participate. Occasionally, where the town representatives and/or developer exhibit a tendency to dominate discussions in the field, the summary meeting is conducted after they leave.

Presentation of the final report is normally made at an evening meeting with the full membership of the local commission(s) and the developer. The purpose of the meeting is to answer questions or

clarify portions of the report. In addition to the Team Coordinator, the SCS District Conservationist or other Team member is on hand to answer the more technical questions. If a question arises which cannot be answered there, the Coordinator will follow up on it after the meeting with the appropriate Team member and relay the answer to the town and developer.

Depending primarily on when a report is completed and the date set for the presentation, the reports are either mailed to the participants prior to the meeting or distributed at the meeting. In general, the material is better understood and the questions are more specific if the participants have had the report ahead of time. However, it is important that the Team does not become directly involved in the local decisions. On occasion when the report was available prior to the meeting, the developer has come into the meeting with revised plans. In these cases, the discussion tends to drift towards the regulatory procedures rather than the Team report. Though this is not particularly desirable, it still does not appear to outweigh the benefits of distributing the reports prior to the meeting.

Individual and Team Reports. As presented in an earlier section of this report, a standardized field sheet has been developed by the RC&D Land and Water Resources Committee for use by the Team. If individual reports follow this basic outline, it is much easier to compile the final Team report. However, there are problems other than the format which are not as easy to deal with.

A Team member may offer considerable information in the field, but minimize this in his report. For example, the value of the site and surrounding area for a particular type of wildlife may be brought up in the field and discussed to some length, and then barely mentioned in the biologist's report. Another problem occurs when a conclusion is offered with no supporting data (e.g., Septic systems will cause pollution of the nearby stream). On rare occasions, a Team member will fail to discuss an aspect of development within his area of expertise (e.g., engineer - building foundations). The one continual problem, which will probably never be eliminated, is the time involved in getting all the reports to the coordinator.

When it comes to writing reports, individuals vary considerably in their abilities and desires. Also, the time available to Team members for preparing their reports varies from one review to another. Therefore, it is unrealistic to expect individual team member reports to be consistent in content and presentation. However, it is reasonable to expect a certain minimum of information and interpretation, with further elaboration and discussion when possible. To assist Team members in achieving this goal, the Land and Water Resources Committee is now working on a handbook which would describe the areas of responsibility for each Team member.

Prior to the demonstration grant from the New England Regional Commission, the format of the final reports varied widely. Within the period of the grant, however, there has been an attempt to standardize the format of the final report. Originally, it followed the

areas identified by the field sheet, with the soils map and limitations chart being placed in an appendix. Since then, a preliminary section has been added to present the general statements on soils, geology, and hydrology. In some cases, this has also included vegetation and wildlife. Maps are used here to delineate boundaries when there is a variety of resources present. All reports are now printed by photo-offset, which contributes to their professional appearance and acceptability by the town or developer.

It is important, however, to maintain flexibility in the format of the report. On projects of a limited nature, a statement of the existing conditions followed by a discussion of the proposal and problems to be encountered is usually adequate. There are also unique cases, such as the large scale septic system, where a format must be developed for that specific report.

EVALUATION

Within the preceding section, many aspects of the projects, participants, procedures, and reports of the completed reviews were discussed. These are considerations which have affected and will continue to affect the operations of the Team. Many of the conclusions drawn can be used to improve the review process and to avoid problems in the future. However, in order to fully evaluate the Environmental Review Team, it is necessary to take a comprehensive look at the purpose of the Team and whether it is being accomplished.

The purpose of the Team is to educate people, specifically landowners, developers, and commission members, to utilize the land most effectively with the least amount of environmental damage. Natural resources should be a key factor in making these decisions. The environmental review is designed to establish a natural resource information base and provide the interpretations necessary on which to judge the continuation, modification, or abandonment of specific projects. By taking a look at previous Team projects and the decisions that were made following the reviews, some indication of the Team's impact can be gained.

The 40 reviews completed to date have been investigated as to their current status. A total of 13 are basically at the same stage as when the review was conducted. Of these, 8 are fairly recent projects (within 8 months of the review) which may be in the planning stages, but not yet publicly presented. The other 5, going back as far as 1969, are definitely at a standstill for the moment, but have potential for future development.

Four projects have been completely abandoned. In 3 cases, the developer (or town in the case of a municipal facility) dropped his plans for the site, due mainly to the limitations identified by the Team. The fourth instance involved State regulatory agencies prohibiting a development on the basis of information provided by the Team. In all of these cases, this was an appropriate use of the Team's report.

Three reviews resulted in major changes in the proposal. Two involved changes in land use, one from residential to recreational and the other from residential to commercial. Both of these were desirable changes. In the latter case, a State agency also made use of the report in a ruling on proposed sewage disposal. The third situation, mentioned previously in this report, was where the original industrial proposal of the town fell through, so the owner proceeded with site preparations of his own, which included the filling of inland wetlands. Involvement of the owner in the original review might have proved beneficial and resulted in his use of the Team's recommendations.

Three of the municipal projects involved evaluation of several alternative sites for proposed facilities. In two cases, the local committee charged with site selection followed the Team's recommendations. These projects are now awaiting local funding for construction. The third instance differed from the normal reviews in that a local official, rather than a Team member, acted as coordinator. As a result, the final report was not put together as well. However,

it still was fairly clear that the site finally chosen by the town had the greatest number of problems. This may well have been due to politics outweighing environmental concerns.

Of the remaining 17 reviews, 4 projects have proceeded with little or no regard to the Team reports, while the other 13 have used or appear to be using the reports in revising plans or issuing permits. In the four cases where the report has not been used, one can be directly linked to a poorly organized review and a report of little substance. Another project falling in this category would be the one dealing with a septage lagoon where the State regulatory officials and Team members disagreed on basic design. However, had the report provided more detail and supporting evidence, the Team's recommendations might have been given more consideration. The last 2 projects were cases where the report clearly stated the site's limitations and the developer and town did not follow through with the recommendations. This includes the project mentioned earlier where the developer is now having difficulty meeting State health regulations for sewage disposal. The other involves a site where the Team felt erosion control measures should be required to protect the adjacent watershed. Not only were control measures not installed during construction, but general practices were contrary to those recommended (e.g. stripping the entire site of vegetation and leaving it open for extended periods).

Of the 13 projects making use of the Team reports, 3 have had concrete results: a subdivision was reduced from over 30 to 12 lots; a monitoring system was installed at an institutional sewage disposal system; and a conservation plan was prepared and is being followed at an excavation site. In 3 cases, zone changes or permits were denied, based at least partially on Team findings. However, in none of these cases does this preclude further development. In 2 more instances, the Team's material is now being used in local decisions involving permits and zone changes. The last 5 projects involve both municipal and private developments which are presently in various stages of planning. In all of these cases it appears the Team reports are being used to some extent.

In summary, of the 27 projects for which some decision has been made or is being made, 21 appear to have taken advantage of at least some of the information provided by the Environmental Review Team. In light of this, the Team appears to be making a significant contribution to the towns in Eastern Connecticut. Hopefully, from the 6 projects which might be termed as partial or complete failures, knowledge has been gained which will help avoid similar situations in the future.

FUTURE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW TEAM

In Connecticut. The Environmental Review Team has shown itself to be of value in Eastern Connecticut. The response from the towns having used the Team has been generally favorable and many are returning with requests for assistance on new projects. There has also been interest expressed by some developers and real estate agents on reviews as to the availability of the Team in other parts of Connecticut.

The benefits of this service accrue to developers, homeowners, towns, and the state. For the developer, particularly when assisted during the early stages of a project, costly problems may be avoided by being aware of a site's limitations and by incorporating prevention and control measures into his plans. With proper planning and construction, homeowners will also be spared the cost of corrective measures for items such as septic failures and flooding. In the long run, the town and state will also benefit in such areas as road maintenance, flood control, and sewer construction.

We feel the Team concept is a valuable one and should be made available statewide on a permanent basis. In order to do this, however, additional coordinators as well as increased staffing in some of the State and Federal agencies will be necessary. The State would appear to be the most logical and justifiable funding source. A program such as this, which is primarily preventative in nature, would complement, and possibly decrease the long-term demand on, costly regulatory and corrective environmental programs now in effect.

In Eastern Connecticut. For the fiscal year 1974-75, it was not possible to obtain funding from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for direct support of the Environmental Review Team on a statewide basis. Therefore, the Eastern Connecticut Team had to pursue other funding sources to enable continuation at the present level of activity. Funding has been obtained from the U.S. Economic Development Administration through the Eastern Connecticut Development Council.

Within the coming months, the Eastern Connecticut RC&D Land and Water Resources Committee will be working on two products which should be of use both in Eastern Connecticut and any future statewide programs. First is a handbook for Team members which would describe the expected contributions of the various disciplines in terms of both inventory and evaluation of a site and its proposed development. This should assist new Team members in understanding their role and in preparing their reports. It would also be of use to other Team members in evaluating the adequacy of their reports. The intention of this handbook would not be to limit individuals to certain aspects of a project, but to ensure that no areas are inadvertently overlooked.

Also being developed at this time is a policy for determining priorities when evaluating requests for reviews. In the past year, the Team has at times been booked for 2 to 3 months in advance.

It is felt by the persons involved that it is undesirable to schedule reviews too far in advance. There is also a possibility that the number of requests may exceed the capabilities of the Team. So to avoid making arbitrary decisions in the future, a policy is now being established for evaluating requests, to be available if and when needed.

The Environmental Review Team of Eastern Connecticut also plans to be available to assist and encourage development of a statewide team in Connecticut and similar teams in other parts of New England.

APPLICABILITY OF THE TEAM CONCEPT TO OTHER NEW ENGLAND STATES

The team concept would appear to be of potential use and value to not only other New England states, but also other states throughout the country. It is particularly valuable for small towns who do not have professional staff available to them and are being faced with increasing development pressures.

The key element contributing to the successful operation of the Environmental Review Team in Eastern Connecticut has been the cooperation between participating Federal, State, and Regional agencies. The prior existence of the RC&D Project provided the vehicle for bringing these agencies together. It has continued to perform an instrumental role in directing the activities of the Team, improving its operation, and maintaining the channels of communication between the agencies.

In developing teams elsewhere in New England, other RC&D Project areas would be logical places to start. A separate committee might also be established on a statewide or regional level to supervise the development and operation of a team. Any such committee should have representation from all agencies who would potentially be contributing Team personnel.

Though working through a committee structure may seem cumbersome, it will help avoid conflicts between separate agencies since decisions are made jointly. Also, if a team can be associated with an independent body, it will assist in maintaining a team identity separate from any regulatory activities of the participating agencies.

As far as the actual composition of a team is concerned, it would have to vary according to the availability of personnel. For example, planning input in Eastern Connecticut is provided by the Regional Planning Agencies. In an area without such agencies, a team might draw from a state planning office, council of governments, or municipality. It would also be possible to use professional consultants, though this would significantly increase the initial funding requirements of a team.

Also to be considered when establishing a team, is the traveling distance and time for the participants. Spending 4 hours going to and from a site in order to spend 2 hours there may not be justifiable. Because of this it may be desirable to have several teams with a given state, organized on a regional basis.

Much of the developmental work done in Eastern Connecticut regarding procedures, field sheets, reports, etc., can be avoided in establishing new teams by starting with these materials and adapting them to fit the needs of a specific area. Most of the comments in the Summary section of this report would also have bearing for other teams. Professionalism and objectivity on the part of the team will always be the critical factor in the acceptance of their activities.

As far as initiating requests from the towns, an informational

or educational program of some sort is necessary. In Eastern Connecticut, a brochure describing the Team and the procedures for requesting a review was distributed to chief executives and local commissions in all towns. State, regional, and RC&D newsletters also publicized the Team's existence and availability. All of these materials have helped to familiarize towns with the Team. However, when it came down to making an actual request for the first time, most towns did so at the personal recommendation of a District Conservationist, Regional Planner, Sanitarian, or other person involved with the Team.

Another aspect which may affect the willingness of a town to request a review is the accessibility of the coordinator. Not only does this reflect items such as the cost of long distance calls, but also the subjective overtones of calling in an outsider. This would be even more true if the coordinator were located in the office of a regulatory agency. Though many small towns are seeking assistance in dealing with large development projects, they are also leery of being told what to do by higher governmental agencies. Our experience has indicated that the sub-state regional level is close enough, both physically and psychologically, to the local level of government to be an effective point at which to place the Team coordinator.

In conclusion, the Environmental Review Team of the Eastern Connecticut RC&D Project is willing to assist other groups in New England interested in and with the resources for establishing a similar team approach. For further information, please contact: Miss Barbara A. Hermann (203-889-2324), Environmental Review Team Coordinator, Eastern Connecticut RC&D Project, 139 Boswell Avenue, Norwich, Connecticut 06360.

APPENDIX

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW TEAM PROJECTS COMPLETED AS OF JUNE 30, 1974

1. Music Vale Estates, Salem, 5/14/69
2. Papineau Property, Sprague, 5/14/69
3. Over the River Estate, Willimantic, 5/23/69
4. Knollwood Lakes, Killingly, 9/69
5. Bowen Property, Eastford, 12/4/69
6. Trepal Property, Mansfield, 2/20/70
7. Moriarty Property, Coventry, 12/10/70
8. Markham Property, East Hampton, 6/13/72
9. Quasset Lake, Woodstock, 8/2/72
10. Town Hall Sites, Mansfield, 9/27/72
11. Randolph Road, Middletown, 11/2/72
12. Industrial Site, North Stonington, 12/7/72
13. Town Landfill, Killingly, 11/20/72
14. Middle School, Westbrook, 1/18/73
15. Glasser Property, Mansfield, 2/1/73
16. Landfill Sites, Norwich, 2/15/73
17. Cooley Subdivision, Killingly, 3/1/73
18. Feldspar Quarry, Middletown, 3/15/73
19. Sewage Disposal System, Brooklyn, 4/19/73
20. Locarno and Grabow Property, East Lyme, 6/7/73
21. Industrial Park, Groton, 6/21/73
22. Industrial Park, Plainfield, 7/5/73
23. Powder Ridge Ski/Resort Area, Middlefield, 8/23/73
24. Ten Oaks, Pomfret, 9/6/73
25. Windham Hill, Ashford and Willington, 9/20/73
26. Salem Ridge, Salem, 10/18/73
27. Septage Lagoon, Essex, 11/1/73
28. Moore Property, Killingworth, 11/15/73
29. Timbercreek Subdivision, Old Lyme, 11/29/73
30. Bowie Property, Westbrook, 12/13/73
31. Red Cedar Lake, Lebanon, 1/3/74
32. Cross Roads Plaza, Waterford, 1/17/74
33. Industrial Site, Preston, 2/7/74
34. Sawmill Brook Race Course, Middletown, 2/21/74
35. Lynwood Heights Subdivision, Waterford, 4/4/74
36. Brown Property, Sprague, 4/18/74
37. Proposed Regional High School, Haddam, 4/25/74
38. Industrial Park, Mansfield, 5/2/74
39. Sacred Heart Parish, Norwich, 5/13/74
40. Elderly Housing, Colchester, 5/13/74